

The OPINION of one that has perused
the Summer Morning's Conversation,
concerning Original Sin, wrote by the
Rev. Mr. Peter Clark, 2,
B., A. N.

In TWO Things principally :

FIRST, That he has offered that, which has rendered it impossible *the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's guilt* to his posterity, should be true in the sense it is held by *Calvinists*.

SECONDLY, That tho' he pretends to be a friend to the *Calvinistical doctrine of imputed guilt*, yet he has deserted this doctrine and given it up into the hands of its enemies, as it teaches the *liableness of all mankind*, without exception, to the torments of hell, on account of the first Sin.

To which is added,

A few remarks on the *recommendatory preface* by
five *reverend Clergymen*.

In a LETTER to a Friend.

JOB xxxii. ——— I also will shew my opinion.

B O S T O N :

Printed and Sold by GREEN & RUSSELL, opposite
the Probate-Office in Queen-street. 1758.





SIR,

My expectations, I own, were considerably raised, when I heard, that the Rev. Mr. *Clark*, a Gentleman noted for piety, good sense, learning and candor, as well as for *Calvinistical Orthodoxy*, had undertaken to answer the *Winter evening's conference about original sin*, which was plausibly wrote, and, in its manner, I confess, the most fitted, of any piece I have seen, to lead the common people into other sentiments concerning the doctrine of *original sin*, than *those* they had been taught in our *Catechism*, and the *Confession of faith* commonly received among us. I soon procured the answer to this Pamphlet upon its publication, and was eager to read it, having no suspicion but that I should

see the *Calvinistical* doctrine of *original sin* placed in a just and strong light, and in a manner so striking, and, at the same time, so soft and candid, as to gain the liking, if not the conviction, of those who were in a contrary way of thinking : In all which respects, to speak plainly and freely, I am much disappointed ; as is the case with several others I have had occasion to converse with.

I did not think, that a Gentleman so generally well spoken of for his humility, meekness, candor and good nature, would have wrote in language so evidently betokening the want of these excellent qualities, I mean, as to present exercise. I see not, that he discovers a more modest sense of his own fallibility, than his antagonist ; or that he writes with a less imbittered spirit. 'Tis strange, we can't in *meekness instruct those that oppose themselves*. This is the christian manner of speaking, and it is naturally suited to bring men to an *acknowledgment of the truth*. I have frequently had reason to profess myself convinced of the propriety and truth of that saying of Solomon, *A soft answer turneth away wrath ; but grievous words stir up anger*. I imagine this Gentleman would have more honored himself, as well as the cause he is pleading, and been more likely to *convince gain-sayers*, if he had wrote more in the *meekness of wisdom*.

How it may appear to others of more penetration than I am master of, I presume not to say ; but to me this Gentleman's performance is not so free'd from ambiguity, darkness, and perplexity, as might be desired. If my share of understanding is not below what is common, there are many, who, upon reading it, must say, if they will speak the real sense of their minds, that it is, in some places, at least, unintelligible to them. Besides,

sides, 'tis very unlucky for the common people, that he has been so lengthy. I suspect, the good ends proposed by this work will, in a great measure, be lost as to them. They will have neither leisure nor patience to go thro' with it. I imagine, the tho'ts here expressed might, to advantage, have been communicated in one third part of the room they at present take up; and the conversation would then have been more universally attended to.

But these are comparatively small things, and I mention them *in transitu* only. What I principally aim at is to let you know my *opinion*, with the *grounds* of it, in two articles. The *first* is, that this Gentleman, so far as I am able to judge, has unhappily said that, which renders it impossible the doctrine of the *imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity* should be true, I mean in the full sense in which it is maintained by *Calvinists*. The *second* is, that tho' he wears the appearance of a friend to the doctrine of imputed guilt, as held by *Calvinists*, yet he has deserted this doctrine, nay, given it up, as it maintains that mankind *universally*, infants as well as others, are liable to the damnation of hell-fire, on account of *Adam's first Sin*.

As to the *first* of these articles, you will remember, I say, as 'tis maintained by *Calvinists*; for I have no concern with any private scheme this Gentleman may have of his own, that is aliene from their's. Agreeably to the doctrine of *Calvinists*, (which will be made evident to you under the next head) *Adam's posterity*, as he was their covenant head, or legal representative, are liable to the death he was threatned with in its full sense, without abatement or mitigation, that is, as including in it the miseries of hell after the death of the body. But 'tis, as I apprehend, impossible, in consistency with

with what this Gentleman has said, that this should be true. A few words will suffice to set this matter in an easy, and, as I would hope, a convincing light. This Gentleman has told us, Page 55, that by the "threatning, " they (our first-parents) were to die in the very day " that he sinned." And again, in the next Page, " if " there had been no redeemer appointed for fallen " man, no satisfaction to the injured justice of God for " that first transgression, to make way for his mercy to " man, we don't suppose, that *Adam* would have had " any posterity at all ; but that he himself would have " been cut off, and perished, according to the rigor of " the threatning, in the very day, in which he sinned, " even as the sinning angels were, and that everlasting- " ly." In these passages, so far as my understanding reaches, he has rendered it impossible to support the doctrine of the imputation of *Adam's* guilt to his posterity, at least in the full sense in which *Calvinists* maintain it, because, in consistency with them, it don't seem possible that he should be their *covenant head*, or *legal representative*, so as that they should be liable with him to the threatned penalty. How could they, since by the covenant that was made with him, he was to " die the very day he sinned," and " could not have " had posterity without the appointment of a redeemer " er"? Surely, if *Adam's* posterity could not have come into existence, as he sinned, upon the foot of the covenant God entered into with him, but there was need of the interposition of grace, and a saviour, in order hereto, this covenant could not be made with him as legally acting for them. Is it possible, this covenant should be so made with *Adam* as that his posterity, in virtue of it, should become liable to the penalty of it, when, according to the tenor of this covenant itself, they must,

must, in case of his sin, have eternally remained in a state of nonentity? For it is to be remembered, it is not according to the tenor of this covenant, but (as this Gentleman pleads) by an after-provisional act of grace, mitigating its rigor, and suspending the operation of its penalty, that it became possible for them to be brought into being. It must be a strange sort of covenant, which is so constituted as to make persons legally liable to a certain penalty, when, at the same time, 'tis not possible it should be inflicted on them, but by the introduction of a posterior act of grace to bring them into existence that they might be the capable subjects of suffering it! To say, that *Adam* so represented his posterity as that they became legally subjected to the penalty threatned in the covenant made with him; and to say, at the same time, that he never could have had posterity in case he sinned, as in fact he did, but by an after provision of grace, is, as far as I am able to conceive, so evident an inconsistency, that no intermediate ideas can make it more clearly so, than it at once appears to be upon the bare proposal of it.

The *second* article concerning which I would give my opinion is, that this Gentleman, tho' he wears the appearance of a friend to the *Calvinistical* doctrine of the imputation of *Adam's* guilt to his posterity, yet has deserted this doctrine, nay, given it up, as it teaches that they are universally liable, on account of his sin, to the torments of hell for ever; which, by the way, is the principal sense, in which it is opposed by *Arminians*, and, as I think, by the person he has been pleased to write against.

You will be fully let into the reasons, upon which I have taken up this opinion, and prepared to judge of the validity of them, if I make two things clear to you.

1st. That

1st. That the *whole* race of *Adam*, *all* his posterity, according to the *Calvinistical* scheme, so sinned in him, and fell with him, or, in other words, are so chargeable with his guilt, have it so imputed to them, as that they are, on that account, liable to, and deserving of, eternal damnation, the pains of hell-fire for ever; that it would be consistent with the justice and mercy of God eternally to damn them all; and that, if any of them are not thus damned, it is owing to nothing but grace, which grace might not have been shewed to any of them. And 2dly. That this Gentleman has not only with caution avoided to assert, or vindicate, the doctrine of imputation in *this sense*, but has really given it up into the hands of it's enemies.

1st. In proof of the *first* of these particulars, I might easily bring testimonies from all the approved, noted, *Calvanistical* writers of bodies of divinity; I might cite a cloud of witnesses from among the most famous *orthodox* writers of sermons and tracts, both in *Old* and *New-England*; I might place before your view extracts from the *Confessions of Faith*, as assented to by most of the *Protestant reformed Churches*:— But this would carry me too great a length; nor is there any need of so much labour: As it happens, I can support the present fact by a single evidence, that is so circumstanced as to be, at once, the evidence of the *Elders* and *Messengers* of the *Churches* of *this Province*, and of a great number of the most celebrated *orthodox* divines in the *English* nation.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* was, under the solemnity of an oath, drawn up, and subscribed, by *one Hundred and six* of as noted and *orthodox* divines as could be collected together from all parts of *Great-Britain*. And, as this *confession of faith* expressed

pressed the *doctrinal* sentiments of the *Elders* and *Messengers* of the *Massachusetts* churches, synodically convened, Anno 1648, at the call of the government, they unanimously tho't fit to profess their hearty assent and attestation to it, excepting some sections which relate to points of controversie in church discipline. So that what is bro't, in a way of evidence, from *this confession*, may fairly be looked upon as the joint testimony not only of more than *an hundred English Calvinistical Divines*, but of *all the Churches of this Province*. And the same may be said of the *longer and shorter Catechisms*, which were compiled, published, and recommended by this famous *Assembly*, and have been generally taught our children from the beginning of the country to this day.

Be pleased now to attend to the evidence I shall bring from this *Confession of Faith*, and these *Catechisms*.

Says the former, I. " Our first parents, being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit.—II. By this sin, they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.—III. They being the root of all mankind, *the guilt of this sin was imputed*, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature convey'd, to *all* their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.—IV. From this original corruption—proceed all actual transgressions.—VI. *Every sin*, both *original*, and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereto, doth, in its own nature, bring *guilt* upon the sinner, whereby he is *bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of*

B

" the

“ *the law, and so made subject to death, with all
 “ miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal.*”

In the *Catechism*, the evidence runs thus. *Longer Ca-
 techism.* “ *Q. Did ALL mankind fall in that first trans-
 “ gression*” ? that is, of our first parents. “ *A. The
 “ venant being made with Adam as a public person,
 “ not for himself only, but for his posterity, ALL
 “ mankind, descending from him by ordinary genera-
 “ tion, sinned in him, and fell with him, in that first
 “ transgression. Q. Into what estate did the fall
 “ bring mankind ? A. The fall bro’t mankind into
 “ an estate of sin and misery. Q. What misery did
 “ the fall bring upon mankind ? A. The fall bro’t
 “ upon mankind the loss of communion with God, his
 “ displeasure and curse, so that they are by nature
 “ children of wrath, bond-slaves to satan, and JUST-
 “ LY LIABLE to all punishments in this world, and
 “ that which is to come. Q. What are the punish-
 “ ments of sin in the world to come ? A. The pun-
 “ ishments of sin in the world to come are everlasting
 “ seperation from the comfortable presence of God,
 “ and most grievous torments in soul and body, with-
 “ out intermission, in hell-fire for ever. Q. Did God
 “ leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and
 “ misery ? A. God did not leave all men to perish in
 “ the estate of sin and misery, into which they fell by
 “ the breach of the first covenant,—but of his meer
 “ love and mercy delivereth his elect out of it, and
 “ bringeth them into an estate of salvation by the se-
 “ cond covenant, commonly called the covenant of
 “ grace.” The like questions are found in the *shorter
 Catechism*, and the like answers are given to them,
 as is generally known to our children*

I have no need to be at the expence of any pains in
 order

order to shew you, that the above evidence is direct and full to the point in hand. If you will only trust your own eyes, you must be convinced, that, according to *this Confession*, and *these Catechisms*, THE WHOLE POSTERITY OF ADAM, all the descendants from him in the ordinary way, without exception or limitation, so sinned in him, had his guilt so imputed to them, as that, upon the account of *this* sin and guilt, they are *justly* liable not only to temporal, but *eternal* death ; not only to miseries in this life, but to *never-ceasing torments in hell* : And that they would all, in fact, have suffered these *eternal pains in hell*, if the grace of God, thro' a redeemer, had not rendered it possible they should escape them ; which grace, being perfectly free and undeserved, might have been with-held, and the whole human race, *Adam* with all his posterity, left to perish *everlastingly in hell-fire*.

This, most certainly, is the true real *Calvinistical orthodox* doctrine of original sin, as it respects the imputation of guilt : Nor can it be denied with a better grace, than that the sun shines at noon day ; tho' it may be disguised, or kept out of sight, if any valuable ends are to be answered thereby.

2ndly, It remains now to satisfy you, that this Gentleman has really deserted the *Calvinistical* doctrine in the above sense, yea, given it up into the hands of its enemies, yea, into the hands of the very author he is answering. This may seem strange ; especially as he was a volunteer in writing against one that had attacked the *Orthodox* doctrine in this sense, and set it in an odious light. But however strange it may appear, it will, I believe, upon examination, be found to be the real truth.

The question, stated by his Antagonist to be discussed

was this, “ Whether we, and all *Adam’s* posterity, are “ charged by God with this first sin of his so as that “ men, women and children are exposed, by this alone, “ to the eternal damnation of hell ” ? Whether this question is stated fairly, or unfairly, a thorough friend to *Calvinism* would, one would think, have taken occasion from it to assert the liableness of all *Adam’s* posterity, infants as well as others, to the *eternal damnation of hell*, viewed as children of *Adam*, and under the imputation of his sin and guilt ; and to labour in shewing the consistency of this doctrine with the perfections of God : But instead of asserting, or vindicating, this *orthodox* doctrine, this Gentleman so speaks upon it as really to give it up.

His finding fault with the state of the question looks this way. If it had been stated thus, “ Whether all that have descended from *Adam* by ordinary generation are liable on account of every sin, both *original* and actual, to the pains of hell forever ” ; he could not have said it was unfairly stated, without directly flying in the face of the *Westminster assembly*, because the *orthodox Calvinistical* doctrine upon this head is expressed in their very words, no otherwise changed then by putting them into the form of a question. And what is the difference, in real sense, between the question as stated by his *Antagonist*, and thus stated from the *Westminster-assembly* ? Are the words, “ all *Adam’s* posterity, men women and children,” more extensive in their meaning, than “ all that have descended from *Adam* by ordinary generation ” ? Surely, he will not say this. Are the words, “ exposed to the eternal damnation of hell,” stronger than these, “ liable to the pains of hell forever ” ? Neither will he pretend this. If therefore there is any unfairness in the state of the question,

question, it must be in these words, "by his sin alone"; but do these carry a different sense from those, "every sin both ORIGINAL and actual"? The truth is, the question is stated according to the precise meaning of the *orthodox* doctrine; and it looks as tho' this Gentleman did not care to enter upon a vindication of it, as he thus finds fault with the question to be debated.

But this will more fully appear by what he goes on to say. Tho' he owns, pag. 7. "the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, men, women and children"; yet, in the very next words, he denies this imputation in the full *orthodox Calvinistical* sense. For he says, "Infants may be, and are, subject to the penal consequences of the first transgression, viz. corruption of nature, pain, sickness and death; in respect whereof it may be truly said to be imputed to them, should they not be thereby *subject to eternal damnation*." Compare this with the foregoing quotations, and judge, whether it agrees with the doctrine of *Calvinism*. The doctrine of this Gentleman is, that some of Adam's posterity, namely infants, may not be subject to *eternal damnation*, tho' they may be subject to the *penal consequences* of his sin. The *orthodox* doctrine is, that the penal consequence of the first transgression is death *eternal* as well as temporal, the *torments of hell-fire* as well as the miseries of the present world; and that infants, unless they are not descended from Adam, have his guilt so imputed to them as to be subject to all this punishment. In short, according to the doctrine received in the country, as that which is *Orthodox*, and *Calvinistical*," Every sin, original as well as actual, deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come"; and consequently, infants, if they are at all chargeable with original sin, are, in that view

view of their case, liable to the *eternal damnation of hell*.

In the next page, he is so far from standing up in defence of the *Calvinian* cause, even in the sense in which it was principally opposed by his Antagonist, that he insinuates as tho' *eternal death*, meaning thereby, an eternal privation of life, not including the *torments of hell*, was the most any suppose infants liable to. His words are these, "A thing [infants actually suffering the torments of hell-fire] which few, or none maintain; even tho' some may suppose them liable to eternal death, that is, an eternal privation of life; as they may be, and yet not suffer the *torments of hell*." He is egregiously mistaken in the first part of this sentence, as I shall presently have occasion to shew you. But, in the latter, he has, to me unaccountably, substituted the private opinion of such men as *Mr. Lætk*, and *Taylor*, in the room of the universally known tenet of *Calvinism*. What thoro' *Calvinist* ever understood, by eternal death, meerly an eternal privation of life? I will be bold to affirm, that no one, who had not departed from the principles of *Calvinism*, can be mentioned that explains this eternal death in any other sense, than including the *torments of hell-fire*. To be sure, this is the sense in which it is to be understood in our *Catechism*, and *Confession of faith*; infomuch that the very children are acquainted with the distinction of death into temporal, spiritual, and *eternal*, meaning thereby *eternal damnation*.

But this Gentleman has been more free still with the *orthodox Calvinistical* principle, upon the point now under consideration. For he says plainly, in his marginal note, page 8. "I could wish, that the latter part of the answer to the 19th question of the *Assembly's*

Assembly's shorter Catechism might be explained, so
 as not to include those who die in *infancy* ; but to
 be understood of those only of *Adam's* posterity,
 who, by indulging their natural corruption, in actual
 transgressions, render themselves liable to the *eternal*
pains of hell, as the utmost degree of misery conse-
 quent on the apostacy." Being *made liable to the*
pains of hell for ever is the part of this answer he
 wishes might be explained so as not to include " those
 who die in *infancy*." If he means by this wish, that
 he would have this answer so interpreted, as that people
 may be taught that there may be *Elect* infants as well
 as others, and that these may, of the meer good plea-
 sure and free grace of God, thro' a redeemer, be de-
 livered *from hell torments* ; this, I suppose, is the ex-
 planation that is generally given this answer by well in-
 structed *Calvinists* ; and there was no need of any wish
 in the case. But, if he means, as I conclude he does,
 from what has been already offered, that he would have
 his answer so explained, as that those who die in *in-*
fancy are not in the number of *Adam's* posterity who
 deserve the *pains of hell-fire*, and are justly liable to
 them, and might justly have them inflicted upon them,
 as being chargeable with his guilt ; I say, if he means
 this, he wishes, in reality of sense, that one main part
 of the *orthodox* doctrine may be explained away ; that
 people, instead of being instructed in one of the great
 principles of *Calvinism*, may have it kept out of their
 sight, or something else substituted in its room. And
 with these words in the *shorter Catechism* are not the only
 points he must wish to be explained in a sense they don't
 contain, but a good many others in the *longer Cate-*
chism, and *Confession of faith*.

In this same 8th pag. he affirms very peremptorily,
 that

that “ we have no reason to conclude they [infants] suffer the eternal torments of hell”; which affirmation, so strongly expressed, is the more strange, as he introduces it, with what is previous to it, with this remark, “ *Secret things belong to God, but things revealed belong to us, and to our children.*” ’Tis not a secret thing, in the opinion of *Calvinists*, that infants, as well as others, are justly liable, viewed as the children of *Adam*, to the damnation of hell. That all *Adam*’s posterity; upon the account of original sin, are liable to the pains of hell forever, is, with them, one of the *things God has revealed to us, and to our children*. Says the great *Calvin*, as I have met with the quotation, “ *Cunctos mortales in unius hominis personâ morti eternæ mancipatos fuisse, scriptura clamat.*” —That is, “ that all mortals are held under the guilt of eternal death in the person of one man, is the loud voice of scripture.” And in this there is an universal agreement among *Calvinists*. But whether God, it being a matter of meer good pleasure, will, thro’ a redeemer, deliver all infants from that eternal damnation, they deserve, and are liable to, is the *secret thing* with *Calvinists*. I don’t know of one thoro’ *Calvinist*, besides this Gentleman, that says in the peremptory manner he does, “ we have no reason to conclude they will suffer the eternal torments of hell.” The contrary is rather their opinion, that is, that some of them, at least, will in fact suffer *eternal damnation*; as will be made evident to you by and bye.

Not that I blame this Gentleman for hoping the best concerning the future state of *infants*: Nor do I find any fault with him, I rather think the better of him, for not saying, with *Calvinists*, that the first sin is so imputed to them, as that they are liable to the damnation

tion of hell, and might justly have it inflicted on them, if he don't believe it. But, if he is not *orthodox* in this point, 'tis to me a wonderful thing, that he should undertake to write against the *Winter Evening's Conversation*; as the *principal*, if not the only, design of that book was to attack the *Calvinistical* doctrine upon this article in *special*.

In short, from what has been already offered, without troubling myself, or you, with any more citations, you will, I think, be fairly led to apprehend, that, according to the notion this Gentleman entertains of the imputation of *Adam's* guilt to his posterity, they are not, *meerly* or *solely*, on this account, subject to that *eternal damnation in hell*, with which his sin was threatned; which, I am sure, is not the doctrine of *Calvinism*, but directly contradictory to it. For which reason, a considerable part of his book is no vindication of the *Calvinistical* doctrine in this point, nor answer to the author he wrote against, as this was the *special* point of *Calvinism* which he attacked. And, as it appears to me, this Gentleman, no more than his Antagonist, is a friend to the *Calvinistical* doctrine, as it maintains the *liableness of all Adam's posterity, without exception, on account of his first sin, to the eternal damnation of hell*; which was the very thing proposed by that writer to be debated.

As I observed at first, this Gentleman's book was, to my apprehension, in some parts, ambiguous and dark, however clear it might be to others of deeper penetration: For which reason, 'tis possible I may have mistaken his sentiments. If this should be the truth, this letter may be a kindness to him, as I know you intend to make it public. Others, I have conversed with, if I am mistaken, are mistaken also. And he will now

have an opportunity, if he believes the *Calvinistical* doctrine of the imputation of *Adam's* guilt to all his posterity in the sense of our *Catechisms*, and the *Westminster confession of faith*, more explicitly to say so; and to supply an essential defect in his book, considered as an answer to the *Winter Evening's Conversation*, I mean the want of a particular and full vindication of this doctrine, as maintained in these *Catechisms* and *Confession of faith*, against the charge of its being inconsistent with the justice and mercy of God.

Nor is the good hope he has of the salvation of all that die in *infancy* any objection against this, if he is a sound and thoro' *Calvinist*. For their being *eventually* saved, or damned, will make no alteration, logically speaking, in the force of the arguments either to prove, or disprove, the consistency of the *Calvinistical* doctrine with the perfections of God. Even upon the supposition that all that die in *infancy* are saved, this doctrine cannot be true, to me it seems impossible it should be true, if it was not consistent with the perfections of God everlastingly to have damned them all. For the doctrine is, that they deserve damnation; that they are liable to it, as chargeable with the guilt of the first transgression; and that, if they are not *eventually* damned, it is owing to the meer good pleasure, and free grace of God, which might not have been dispensed towards them. But these cannot be truths, if in the previous reason of things, it would have been inconsistent with the justice and other perfections of God, to have eternally damned them. The supposing therefore that all that die in *infancy* are saved is no vindication of the *Calvinistical* doctrine upon the head under debate. In true reason, separate from passion, affection, and imagination, the objected difficulties are precisely

cisely the same, as if it be supposed that they are *eventually* damned. I could therefore wish this Gentleman, notwithstanding his hoping so well of those who die in infancy, had gone particularly and largely into a reconciliation of the *Calvinistical* doctrine, as opposed by his Antagonist, with the perfections of God. There is yet opportunity; and he may hereby greatly serve the cause of *orthodoxy*, by removing away the greatest stumbling-block in the way of its being embraced.

It would, it may be, be a disappointment to you, if I should say nothing of the *recommendatory preface*, with which the book I have given you my opinion of, is ushered into the world. I profess an esteem for the Reverend Clergymen who have signed it; tho' I can't say, that I think they are infallible. They have given proof, that they are capable of being mistaken, by adopting a mistake of the reverend author whose work they praise. He had said, pag. 8, that "few or none maintain that infants suffer the torments of hell-fire." They say, the *Winter Evening's Conversation* "makes "tragical exclamations against the doctrine of *original* "sin, commonly received in the churches of the reformation, as if it *imply'd*, that children dying in "infancy suffer the *eternal torments of hell* for the "first sin of *Adam*; — when it is well known, the "Patrons of that doctrine are wont to leave the future state of *such* among the secret things which "belong to God alone." This, tho' the assertion of a celebrated author, and five venerable attestators, I must be so free as to call a mistake, and a very great one.

I may justly conclude, that these Gentlemen will look upon *Calvin* as a *Patron* of the *orthodox* doctrine concerning

concerning original sin. Hear what he says. In his commentary on *Rom.* 5. 17, having observed, that there were two differences between Christ and *Adam*, and having described the first, he goes on, “ The other is, “ that the benefit by Christ does not come to all men, “ as *Adam* involved his whole kind in *damnation*. “ And the reason is in readiness ; for since the curse “ we draw from *Adam* is derived to us by nature, it “ is not to be wondered, if it embraces the whole mass : “ But that we may participate of the grace of Christ, “ it is needful we should be united to him by faith. “ Therefore that you may possess the miserable inheritance of sin, it is enough that you are a man ; for “ it resides in flesh and blood. That you may enjoy “ the righteousness of Christ, it is necessary to be a “ man endowed with faith, because fellowship with “ him is obtained by faith. This is communicated to “ *infants* in a peculiar way ; for they have in the covenant the right of adoption, by which they pass into “ the communion of Christ. I speak concerning the “ *children of the pious to whom the promise of grace is made* : FOR OTHERS [à communione nequaquam eximuntur] ARE BY NO MEANS EXEMPTED “ FROM THE COMMON LOT ” ; that is, as he had said before, from the *damnation* *Adam* had involved his whole kind in. And that he includes in their damnation the torments of hell cannot well be doubted, as, in the quotation from him a few pages back, he prefixes the Epithet *eternal* to this damnation. But to prevent all dispute upon this matter, I will cite another passage from him. ’Tis in these words of the 3d book and the 23d chapter of his institutions, “ I ask, from whence “ it is, that the fall of *Adam* hath involved so many “ nations together with their *infant* children in *eternal* “ death

death without remedy, unless because it so seemed good in God's sight"?

St. *Augustin*, who is characterised by the author these Gentlemen recommend, pag. 99, as one that has been had in high esteem, by the universal church, as an eminent instrument, whom God raised up to maintain and vindicate the doctrine of grace against *Pelagius*, and other *Hereticks*";—This unexceptionable father, in Lib. I. de pec. mer. et remis. cap. 16, expressly says, "Infants, dying without baptism, will suffer of all persons the mildest damnation." You see he directly affirms their *damnation*, tho' he speaks of it as the mildest; as indeed he ought to do.

It will not be questioned, whether the famous *Arthur Hildersham* was a Patron of *Calvinism*; and he says on *Psalms* 51, Lect. 55, "It is clear, God has declared his anger against the sins of infants, not only by pursuing their *sins* with hatred, but their *persons*; not by inflicting upon them temporal punishments only, but by casting them into hell." And in the following page, he calls it "a damnable error, that all that die in infancy obtain the heavenly inheritance." On the contrary, he says, that "many infants have been [*Vasa iræ, et titiones inferni*] vessels of wrath and fire-brands of hell."

But, as it would too much increase the length of this letter, to insert all the testimonies, upon this head, that might be collected from particular persons, I shall do here, as I did before, that is, give you in one view the evidence of *an hundred and six* eminent Patrons of the doctrine of original sin, as received in the churches of the reformation, and this as subscribed to by the *Elders* and *Messengers* of the churches of *this province*, Anno 1648. 'Tis contained in those words
of

of the 3d article of the 10th chap. of the *Westminster Assembly's confession of faith* ; “ *Elect infants*, dying “ in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, thro’ “ the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how “ he pleaseth.” The phrase *Elect infants*, essentially includes in it the idea of some who are *left*. If there are *elect infants*, then there are *reprobate infants*. There can’t be some *chosen*, unless others are *passed by*. And whoever are *passed by*, are neither “ redeemed, nor justified, nor sanctified, nor saved by Christ ” ; as in the 2d article of the 3d chap : The unavoidable consequence of which is, that they must *perish eternally*, as they are not delivered out of the state the fall had bro’t them into, which was a state that exposed them to the *torments of hell-fire forever* ; as has been shewn to be the doctrine of this confession.

I shall add here, as ’tis one of the known principles of *Calvinism*, that all *Adam’s* posterity, who are not *chosen in Christ before all worlds to eternal life*, will eventually suffer the torments of hell ; ’tis certain if there are *non-elect* infants, they must suffer these torments. And will these Gentlemen say, ’tis the *Calvinistical* doctrine, that *all infants are elected to eternal life* ! I will publicly own I am mistaken, if they can produce so much as one *Calvinistical* writer, of any considerable note, who has ventured to say so. Nay, ’tis not the opinion of all *Calvinists*, that all the children, even of the pious and faithful, that die in infancy, are among the *elect* that will be saved. Such learned and celebrated *Calvinists*, as *Paræus*, *Zanchy*, *Perkins*, and *Donteklok*, as I find it expressed by a great author, directly assert, “ that *Election* and *Reprobation* take place among the children of the faithful, insomuch that some of their children that die “ in infancy are precipitated into hell.”

I shall bring one witness more. It may seem needless, when I have just given you a *multitude* in one. But this may be the more regarded, as there are a number still alive who might know him, and be able to assure us of the truth of what we have heard of him, that he was a Gentleman of great piety, understanding and learning, as well as of an unspotted reputation for *orthodoxy*. And besides, the little book that contains this evidence has been dispersed into all parts of the country, and put particularly into the hands of the children and youth for their awakening, and instruction, and, possibly, by some of the signers of this preface. The book, I mean, is Mr. *Wiggleworth's day of doom*, the *sixth* edition of which I now use, tho' it was printed more than forty years ago. I shall transcribe more of his words than I should have done, had they not, besides affirming the fact I am proving, bro't the Judge of all the earth justifying the equity of, notwithstanding all pleas, upon the known indisputable principles of *Calvinism*. His words are these.

(166)

“ Then to the bar, all they drew near
 who dy'd in infancy,
 And never had or good or bad
 effected perf'nally ;
 But from the womb unto the tomb
 were straitway carried,
 Or at the least 'ere they transgressed,
 who thus began to plead.

(167)

If for our own transgression
 or disobedience,
 We here did stand at thy left hand,
 just were the recompence ;

But

But *Adam's* guilt our souls hath spilt,
 his fault is charg'd on us ;
 And that alone hath overthrown,
 and utterly undone us.

(168)

Not we but he ate of the tree,
 whose fruit was interdicted :
 Yet on us all, of his sad fall
 the punishment's inflicted.
 How could we sin that had not been,
 or how is his sin our
 Without consent, which to prevent,
 we never had a pow'r ?

(169)

O great Creator, why was our nature
 depraved and forlorn ?
 Why so defil'd, and made so vile
 while we were yet unborn ?
 If it be just, and needs we must
 transgressors reckoned be
 Thy mercy, Lord, to us afford
 which sinners hath set free.

(171)

Then answered the judge most dread,
 God doth such doom forbid,
 That men should did eternally
 for what they never did.
 But what you call old *Adam's* fall,
 and only his trespass
 You call amiss to call it his ;
 both his and your's it was.

(172)

He was designed of all mankind
 to be a public head,

A common root, whence all should shoot,
and stood in all their stead.

He stood, and fell, did ill or well
not for himself alone,

But for you all, who now his fall
and trespass would disown.

180

You sinners are, and such a share
as sinners may expect,

Such you shall have ; for I do save
none but my own *Elect*.

Yet to compare your sin with their,
who liv'd a longer time,

I do confess your's is much less,
tho' every sin's a crime.

181

A crime it is ; therefore in bliss
you may not hope to dwell ;

But unto you I shall allow
the easiest room in Hell.

The glorious King thus answering
they ceased and plead no longer ;

Their consciences must needs confess
his reasons are the stronger."

I am ready to think, it appears pretty plain to you
this time, that these Gentlemen were mistaken.
Whether they will entertain this apprehension of the
matter, I know not ; but this I am well satisfied of,
that they will not be free to declare, " that they are
deeply concerned to find the scripture-doctrine of origi-
nal sin mis-represented and derided," by the last quo-
ted author. And if not, why should they say this of
the author of the *Winter Evening's Conversation* for

D

con-

considering infants, in the course of his arguments, as suffering in the fire of hell?

But should it be even supposed, that these Gentlemen were not mistaken in the fact we have been considering, is it not very extraordinary, when they had so fair an occasion to give their attestation to the known *orthodox* doctrine, that infants, as well as others, deserve the damnation of hell, and are justly liable to it, as chargeable with the guilt of the first sin; I say, is it not strange, that they should omit dropping a word insinuating the truth of this great *Calvinistical* point: Especially, as they took care to give their readers to understand, that the *orthodox* doctrine did not so much as “IMPLY that children dying in infancy suffered the torments of hell for this first sin.” May not weak well-minded people be in danger of being hereby turned aside from what they esteem the truth of scripture? If I am not misinformed, some of these Gentlemen have found fault with others, and rebuked them too, for withholding the truth, when they had a fair occasion to speak to it. And the occasion here loudly called upon them to speak; for if they were at the pains carefully to read the book they recommended, before they signed the preface to it, 'tis difficult to conceive how they could avoid seeing, that the true *Calvinistical* doctrine, as it respects the liableness of all *Adam's* posterity to the torments of hell, on account of his sin, was rather opposed than asserted, or vindicated. And yet, they leave this important point altogether untouched, or rather so speak upon infants not suffering the torments of hell, as to endanger people's being led to think they were not liable to them, in any view whatever. I can't but esteem this a great omission in such Gentlemen.

There is one thing more that has given me some surpris

prise. It is this. They “solemnly advise and entreat
 “the churches, whenever vacant, to beware of settling
 “any man in the pastoral office, who does not profess
 “a firm belief of the great doctrine here defended,
 “and the other important articles of our holy religion
 “dependent on it, or connected with it.” A man may
 firmly believe the doctrine here defended, and all o-
 ther articles connected with it, and not believe with our
Catechisms, and the *Westminster confession of faith*,
 that all *Adam’s* posterity are liable to the damnation
 of hell, as chargeable with the guilt of his first sin :
 And yet, in consistency with the solemn advice of these
 Gentlemen, any vacant church might settle him in the
 pastoral office over them. What will a late venerable
orthodox Council say to this, who solemnly advised one
 of our churches to dismiss their pastor, as unfit to be
 any longer their pastor, if not upon this charge only,
 upon this as a principal one, namely, “that he did not
 “think it consistent with the justice and mercy of God
 “eternally to damn any of *Adam’s* posterity, MEERLY
 “upon the account of his first sin.” Surely, if a man
 may be settled in the pastoral office, tho’ he don’t be-
 lieve *Adam’s* posterity are liable to the torments of
 hell, *meerly* on account of his first sin, it ought to be
 no reasonable objection against his being continued in
 it, that he can’t see the consistency of this doctrine
 with the justice and mercy of God.—But I shall leave
 that Council, and these Gentlemen, to settle this point
 between themselves.

I have now given you my opinion, with the grounds
 of it ; and might easily have enlarged this letter into
 the bulk of a book of 156 pages, but that I tho’t it
 best not to be lengthy. Judge for yourself, and do it
 impartially.

I only add, I heartily join with these Gentlemen
 praying, that " this people and their offspring may be
 " *nourished up in the words of faith and good do-*
 " *ctrine* ; and that *the faith once delivered to the*
 " *saints* may be preserved pure and entire in the
 " churches, throughout all generations."

I am your sincere friend,

A. B.



E R R A T A.

Title-Page, line 16, read, To which are added. 3

P. 10. l. 6, read, Covenant.

P. 24. l. 23, read, die eternally.
